



# School Administrative Unit 21

May 25, 2022

Dear SAU 21 families,

I can't believe I am writing another one of these letters. Our hearts go out to the children, staff, and families of Uvalde, Texas in the wake of an unspeakable tragedy. As parents, we send our children to school every day with the hope and faith that they will arrive home safely. For too many families in our country, in Parkland, in Newtown, in Columbine, and in numerous other communities where the number of those lost to gun violence was smaller, that was not the case.

Since Columbine, schools have taken increasing measures to protect the children and staff in their care. Locally, we have enacted emergency management teams, practiced drills beginning with lockdowns and "advancing" to active shooter drills. We have locked our entrances and hardened our campuses with measures such as barricades and security systems, and we have added School Resource Officers. We devote hours of our professional development time to preparing staff to respond to emergency situations, and we work collaboratively with local law enforcement and first responders (through our Safety and Security Task Force) to both prevent and prepare to respond to such situations. We have added additional counselors and implemented social emotional learning tools and strategies in all of our schools. Among other things, those programs help to teach children skills and strategies for relating to others, coping with anger, frustration, and adversity, and help to destigmatize mental health and asking for help. Through programs such as Responsive Classroom, Open Circle, and advisories, we work hard to help students be part of our school communities. We have behavioral intervention and response teams in place that are activated when there is a concern about safety on the part of a student. We teach students to "see something, say something," and we have an [anonymous tip line](#) available on our web site where anyone can report a concern or request help. These measures continue to evolve as we learn from each of these tragic events and take whatever additional steps we can to protect and support our children, staff, and families.

You can find tips for talking with your child about school violence [here](#). If your child is particularly effected by yesterday's events or if you are looking for more support, please reach out to your child's school. Our teachers, counselors, and administrators are available to support them.

As I finished this letter this morning, I was sitting in my car in front of one of our beautiful elementary schools. While I watched children arrive full of energy and joy, tears started to fall from my eyes. That is because I know that those despite all of our efforts and all of our hope to the contrary, it is possible that those measures may not be enough on any given day. That said, I continue to send my children to school and to show up at work each day. I continue to put my faith in our small, New Hampshire communities where we have the ability to know each child and to connect with each other when things aren't ok.

As always, feel free to reach out to me or members of our administrative team if we can provide further assistance or support.

Best,

*Meredith*

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